

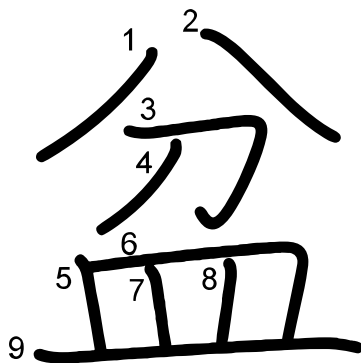


TEACHING TUESDAY

KANJI: BON

AUGUST 8, 2017

The kanji for the festival of Obon (お盆) was originally shortened from a much longer kanji for the festival, 盂蘭盆, *urabon*. The kanji that remains, 盆, may seem a little odd because its main radical means plate 皿 and alone it generally means “tray,” but in the context of Obon, it refers to a large and famous festival. The reason it remains is because of the roots of the festival, which involved offerings or votive known as a bon presented on trays (盆) at the festival. As the festival evolved, it simply became known as Obon in reference to these bon instead of the much longer original name.



On’yomi: ボン; bon (*boh-n*)

Meaning: the Obon or Bon Festival;
offering presented at the Obon festival